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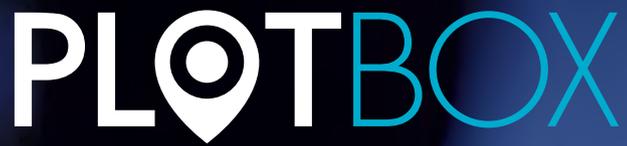
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#CouncilMatters

Supporting local communities throughout the pandemic





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Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive, APSE

Chin up its 2021....!

I don't think any of us lamented the end of 2020 ... A decade which started with a glimmer of hope for renewal in local government with promises of an end to austerity - of levelling up and a new beginning. Then by just mid-January news started to emerge of a deadly virus – but surely it wouldn't reach Europe, let alone the islands of the UK? The odd news snippet soon turned into headlines and by March we found ourselves on the collective wrong side of a pandemic. The rest, as they, is history. So where to now for 2021? January has already felt like a whirlwind. With new lockdown measures it feels like Groundhog Day for frontline services. Resilience has been tested to the limits across the board, from chief executives to refuse loaders, the efforts have been exemplary to keep the show on the road. We ended 2020 with a thank you poem from renowned poet Tony Walsh and one particularly prophetic line stands out to me 'And we know this isn't over, there's a long way still to go'. How true is that line is proving to be!

However, there is now hope. The vaccine rollout is on schedule and whilst there will be bumps along the road it is offering real hope. Again, the tenacity of local government, in particular in public health, in

supporting the rollout logistics cannot go without recognition and thanks. Across all services, whilst no longer the headline news, we know that the work supporting communities is ongoing, and the need for council services has simply never been greater.

So where to next? Chancellor Rishi Sunak is due to make his budget announcement on the 3 March. This will set the tone of engagement for central and local relations for the coming year and indeed beyond. It is hard to imagine anyone brave enough not to recognise the role of local government as the most impactful arm of the local 'state' in supporting our communities. The work of local councils will not cease with the successful rollout of the vaccine. We know that that is only the beginning of the end. The future of our communities is in the balance. Covid-recovery will mean new jobs, in new economic circumstances, new skills and different ways of delivering services; supporting local economies that are green and sustainable.

So, chin up for 2021. The pandemic has proven the mettle of local councils. It would be a brave Chancellor that ignores the changed dynamics of the central / local relations.

Contents

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| 5 | Ensuring sports and leisure services are fit for the future
A new research programme involving CLOA, LGA and APSE | 35 | Getting to grips with COVID
Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Council |
| 6 | The East Riding: A tour de force
East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Overall Council of the Year 2020 | 37 | Underground Refuse Systems framework launch event
Liverpool City Council and APSE Solutions |
| 8 | From pool attendant to council chief
Terry Collins, outgoing Chief Executive, Durham Council | 38 | Building a consensus for action on the climate crisis
APSE Energy and The Consultation Institute |
| 11 | An economic fightback plan: Innovating to respond to demand in times of crisis
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council | 42 | Hazards, highways and council heroes
Alan Plom, ex-HSE Principal Inspector and APSE Associate |
| 12 | The drones are coming
CIVATAglobal | | |
| 15 | Point of view
Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair of the APPG on School Food | | |
| 16 | Council Matters
A special poem from Tony Walsh for local government | | |
| 22 | Welcoming Velocity
New APSE Approved Partners | | |
| 23 | Annual Service Awards 2020
A list of this year's finalists and winners | | |
| 32 | "I will miss the people. I already do."
Fiona Lees, outgoing Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Council | | |

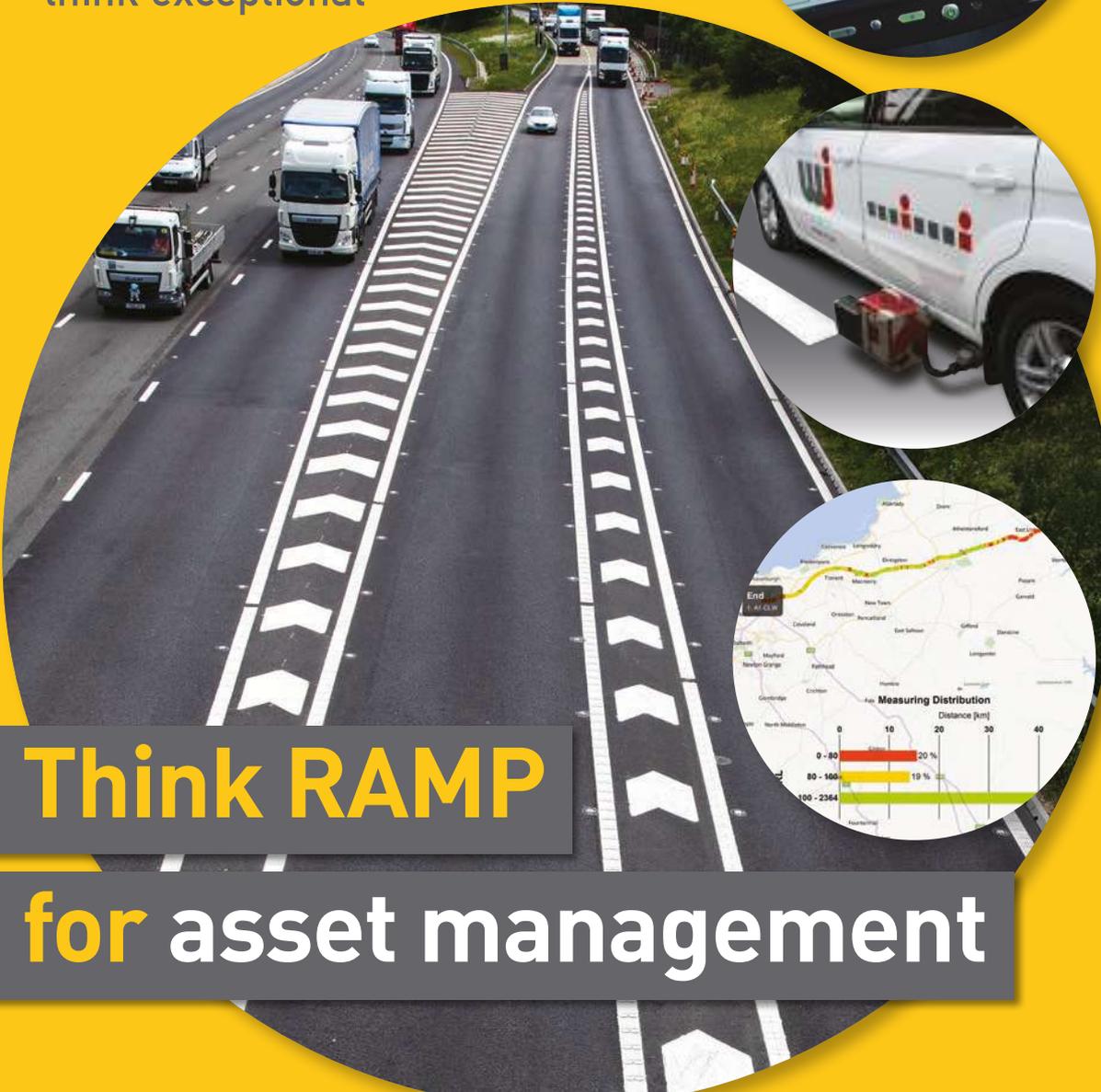
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Ensuring sports and leisure services are fit for the future

Three partner organisations, LGA, CLOA and APSE, have developed a research project to explore the future of local authority sports and leisure services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has arguably amplified inherent fault lines in the provision of traditional sport and leisure services, where an eroded intelligent client base and a focus on efficiency and budget savings has potentially had a negative impact on the resilience and meaning of what local public sport and leisure services (more especially leisure centres) are there to do. There are concerns, being voiced within the sector, that huge income loss and budget pressures now faced by local authorities and operators has generated significant distress, and frustration, both in terms of the future sustainability and delivery of the services. Crucially questions are now being asked as to whether these traditional models are fit for purpose in reaching the wider population – with the COVID-19 pandemic having magnified the fundamental gaps, in health and well-being .

Perhaps even more worryingly the debate about being physically active appears to have been taken over by the provision of facilities, both commercial and public, which is arguably something of a disservice to the challenges of addressing physical inactivity in our communities. Whilst of course facility based activity has its place, and a previously buoyant private sector perhaps serving different needs to the public sector working happily alongside each other, we know that society is now in a very different place post the pandemic, both financially and in the challenges, we face in health terms.

Critically there remains stubborn challenges when it comes to addressing physical inactivity with the impact of the pandemic striking our most deprived communities worst, thereby only serving to amplify existing levels of inactivity and inequality in those areas. It raises questions about the positioning and effectiveness of sport and leisure services in terms of its contribution to addressing these massive challenges.

We know that the benefits of being more physically active are enormous - perhaps a silver bullet if there ever was one - and it has been encouraging to see the priority afforded to it by Government during lockdowns. However, those that need to be active the most will typically be most adversely impacted by the pandemic; this needs to be a key point of focus as we come to terms with community renewal and support that needs to follow in future years. By embracing a more collaborative, systems based approach to addressing physical inactivity local authorities and their stakeholders can exert powerful influence and help fundamentally shape the look and feel of a locality, bringing about a healthier, more sustainable, economically stronger and more inclusive place.

The ambition of the research project

Through discussions with sector leaders and stakeholders, APSE, CLOA and the LGA will explore how sport and leisure services have changed

in recent years in addition to the current challenges faced by local authorities. The research will also look at the future direction of travel and potential contributions traditional sport and leisure can play locally.

The research will attempt to provide guidance and interpretation of “physical activity systems working” allowing sports and leisure services to reflect on what they are currently delivering and whether there is a need to reset in order that they can play their part in supporting better place-based outcomes.

Parameters of work

The research proposal will build upon a “traditional” view/model of the sport and leisure service. In summary this will cover the following areas:

- Provision of Leisure Centres, Pools and Sports facilities, indoor and outdoor.
- Sports development/community sport
- Sports events

However, given the increasing scope and reference to addressing physical inactivity and wellbeing, the work will also reference the following:

- High level assessment of National and local strategies that would impact on service design and delivery e.g., new Sport England Strategy, Public Health Outcomes framework, Local Health and Wellbeing plans, Climate emergency, Economic policy, Transport Policy, Planning policy
- The role of Physical activity in place making and meeting wider outcomes.
- The strategic development of Physical Activity and how it is led nationally and locally. Through discussions with sector leaders and stakeholders, APSE, CLOA and the LGA will explore how sport and leisure services have changed in recent years in addition to the current challenges faced by local authorities.

To register your interest in keeping up to date with this research project or to offer information, case studies and participation in research related events and roundtables please visit our “Resource Hub for Sports and Leisure Services” fill in your details and we will ensure you are kept up to date with the programme of work. •





EAST RIDING

OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL



The East Riding: A tour de force

Fighting off stiff competition, East Riding of Yorkshire Council scooped APSE Overall Council of the Year at the APSE Service Awards 2020. The Council spoke to APSE Direct and revealed the secrets to their success.

Our vision, 'Your East Riding... Where everyone matters' reflects the importance of our ambition for everyone we serve to have the best quality of life. Never had that vision been tested more than in the year of 2020. Residents, staff, businesses and the community have never known a challenge quite like it, yet 2020 was the year our resilience and ambition shone like never before. Our services not only continued, but excelled. Our staff adapted and achieved. Our communities united and thrived. Together, and side-by-side with all councils across the UK, 2020 was the year we provided the very best of local government services.

In what has been an exceptionally challenging year, to be crowned Overall Council of the Year by APSE at its Annual Service Awards in December is a phenomenal accolade for East Riding of Yorkshire Council and is testament to our staff's ongoing dedication and commitment to delivering highly-valued services for our residents, businesses and communities.

Councillor Richard Burton, Leader of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, was delighted with the recognition and heaped praise on staff at the Council who have maintained such high standards throughout a global pandemic.

He said, "The prestigious title of Overall Council of the Year comes at the end of what has been an incredibly difficult year.

"With huge thanks, I recognise the hard work everyone within our Council continues to contribute, building effective relationships with our residents to achieve ever higher value for money, and thank you to APSE for sharing the best of what we do in a strong collaboration with our business partners and the voluntary and community sector.

As well as the Overall Council of the Year Award, the Council's registration and celebration services, environmental and waste services, fleet services, civil engineering services and road safety and housing services were all APSE finalists this year.

The East Riding's waste and recycling team won Best Service Team: Waste Management and Recycling Services for the second year in a row. The East Riding achieved England's highest recycling rate for three years running. We recycled, reused or composted 64.8% of household waste – more than 344 other councils. To show how far we have progressed, 12 years ago we were ranked 214th with a 24.9% recycling rate.

Within the Communities and Environment directorate, we look to proactively

develop our services for the benefit of the communities we serve. We continue to seek out new opportunities to enhance our offer to ensure all our services are valued by our residents, and work in partnership to address complex problems including climate change, crime, health inequalities and economic growth.

The East Riding achieved England's highest recycling rate for three years running. We recycled, reused or composted 64.8% of household waste – more than 344 other councils.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has always recognised the importance of supporting those most vulnerable in our society and in particular in 2020 - refugees. Offering greatly needed assistance to these families fleeing an extremely desperate situation is a great example of this. Shelter, security and the opportunity to improve one's family circumstances are the cornerstones of what our society is built upon. By working with non-government organisations, partners in the private and charitable sectors - along with strong cross directorate linkages - we have been able to offer a holistic package of support to help these new residents of the East Riding fulfil their potential and integrate into the new communities.

With its spectacular scenery and thriving tourism industry, the East Riding is highly regarded for attracting major companies to locate themselves there. Technology giant Siemens, chemical industry specialists Croda International and biomass experts ARC have all decided to move to a state-of-the-art site in Goole recently. But Cllr Burton sees this very much as just the start of things to come.

Technology giant Siemens, chemical industry specialists Croda International and biomass experts ARC have all decided to move to a start-of-the-art site in Goole recently.

Cllr Burton said, "We are shaping the East Riding into a place where there is great innovation and where ambition flourishes and we stand proud and strong alongside our

Yorkshire neighbours. We have a strong focus on enhancing our communities, embracing commercialism and the ever-changing world of technology as well as delivering a sound financial strategy."

Key to the success is the excellent partnership with residents and businesses - essential for progress. Both the successes in service delivery and attracting economic investment have been thanks to unrivalled collaboration between the Council, its residents and partners. Through close working with the Humber and the York, North Yorkshire & East Riding Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Environment Agency and Whitehall departments, the council has helped unlock crucial funding for UK-leading flood alleviation and major transport projects.

Councillor Burton added, "We believe the East Riding is a fantastic place to live, work, shop, learn, play, invest and visit. Our staff are asked to consider not only how we can improve our services, but also how we can help each other to innovate using digital, and make best use of every pound spent to achieve best results for the public and to support business growth.

"Despite the clear obstacles throughout 2020, the East Riding has continued to progress and prosper in a number of different areas and this culminated in being named the Overall Council of the Year.

"Whilst being very proud of everyone at East Riding, I'd also like to pay tribute to all our colleagues across the country for their hard work in unprecedented times. We know how hard every authority is working to support their communities in such times, whilst also delivering essential services. We wish all councils the very best for 2021." •

Image on page 6 courtesy of SWPix.com

Image below: Council Leader Cllr. Richard Burton





From pool attendant to council chief: Looking back on an incredible career

Following a 43-year career in local government, Terry Collins retired as Chief Executive of Durham Council in December 2020. APSE Direct interviewed Terry about his accomplishments as council chief and what he will miss the most about working in local government.

Terry, you joined Durham Council in February 2009 as Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods – two months prior to the new unitary authority being established – before becoming Chief Executive for the past five years. As Chief Executive, what has been your greatest achievement?

It's difficult to name just one achievement as fortunately there have been quite a few.

I think managing our budget well (gross budget of £1.4b) and keeping savings on track has been a significant achievement, especially as funding has reduced whilst costs and demand for services such as children's and adults have massively increased. It's been extremely challenging although I think the Council is in a solid position financially which is a good place to be at any time.

Bringing £3.8b of development to the county in recent years including some big players such as Amazon and Hitachi whilst working with world class organisations such as Durham University are something that I'm really proud of delivering. These developments have helped to create more than 3,000 jobs which is incredibly important. The development of a comprehensive Culture, Sports, Arts and Tourism offer has helped to raise the profile of the county particularly with events such as Lumiere which is the UK's largest outside lighting festival attracting 250,000 people to Durham over four nights in November every other year. The developments of Beamish Outdoor Museum, Bowes Museum and Bishop Auckland with the amazing Kynren, History of England outdoor event have also all helped to increase footfall and visitor numbers to the county increasing income and creating more jobs.

Bringing £3.8b of development to the county in recent years is something that I'm really proud of delivering.

I'm really proud of my work with children's services which needed a lot of improvement when I took over. It's been fantastic working with frontline staff to understand their roles and to experience the very sensitive issues that they have to face each day. They are all amazing and we are performing well now.

We have also undertaken lots of great work integrating Adult Services with Health which has had a massive benefit to our community. Lastly the transformation programme within the council has saved more than £40m and has changed the way we all work, whilst putting us in a strong position to respond to the COVID emergency. Obviously we weren't aware that this was going to happen, although we were very fortunate that we had changed many work practices including moving to flexible and modern ways of working. This meant that the changes that have been needed to keep the organisation going have been easier to implement and have been supported by our team.

Everyone at the Council has contributed to how we have responded to austerity and more recently the COVID emergency. We have had to do far more with far less people; having had more than £250m withdrawn from our budget. It's been incredibly challenging although the staff have been magnificent.

Overall, I have loved every minute being Chief Executive despite the significant demands of leading one of the largest unitary councils in the UK. It's been 'full on' but I feel privileged to have been able to lead the organisation and help the people of our county.

In your 11 years at the Council, what change has been most dramatic?

Recently COVID has seen the way we operate change dramatically although I would say there are many positives that we will take forward when we return to the new normal...hoping that this will be sooner rather than later!

We have also had to change the way the council operates to generate savings and we have lost many vital services such as the community support workers who once worked with young people in the community on evenings and weekends. Some of the problems faced in communities now are a result of these service reductions and even relatively small changes like removing floral displays have had an impact on people and how they feel about themselves and their area. Councils are the glue that hold the community together and help others. The COVID emergency has demonstrated that councils know how to contact hard to reach groups and know to provide a community based approach to tackle key issues.

The COVID emergency has demonstrated that councils know how to contact hard to reach groups and know to provide a community based approach to tackle key issues.

I think the role of Chief Executive has intensified since I started and, whilst it's always been busy, it's now 24/7, 365 days a year. I have commented sometimes that there should be a health warning given to those who undertake these roles. That said, I have generally found the work to be extremely rewarding and working with the staff and the members at the Council has always been a fantastic experience.

What has been your biggest challenge as Chief Executive?

I think the biggest challenge of the role is keep focused on council priorities and to keep the organisation moving forward whilst still keeping close to issues happening on the ground and the staff who do an amazing job. I think it's easy to be incredibly busy and still not achieve a great deal. Focusing on priorities and what is important to the organisation is really key as is remembering to have downtime as you do need a break even if you do think you do not! I went from March to Christmas without taking any leave due to the COVID emergency which was a mistake in hindsight - although everyone has been under such great pressure. Downtime and diversionary activities are essential as it's important to stay fresh as the next challenge might be the greatest!

I don't really have any regrets as it's easy to manage in hindsight. I strongly believe on using your energy to focus on how you can influence what's ahead of you though you can always learn from what's happened in the past. Learning is really important but don't beat yourself up as things won't always go well. Just reflect, learn and then take that forward trying your best to do better next time giving 110%.

What will you miss most about the role?

I will miss our fantastic staff, members and meeting colleagues in similar roles across the country including my friends at APSE who have been amazing throughout my career. I have always spent time meeting and seeing what our staff do and this has been one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role. Our staff have been incredible, and I have total admiration for their work. Whether it's collecting the bins in the rain and snow, working with very vulnerable people, providing services that improve our people's health or the vast array of other services we provide they have been superb.

As Chief Executive I appreciate that I am only as good as the people who work for me. Fortunately, I have been very lucky working with such an amazing team within a really positive culture at the Council. I will miss everyone although the memories of my experiences working with them will remain with me for the rest of my life.

As Chief Executive I appreciate that I am only as good as the people who work for me. Fortunately, I have been very lucky working with such an amazing team within a really positive culture at the Council.

What advice would you give to your successor?

My advice has been to enjoy the role but look after yourself as it is very demanding. It is easy to find yourself working most evenings and weekends in addition to core hours whilst still having early morning meetings and late calls to take. Eventually this will have an impact on you so its important to pace yourself and have some good diversionary activities that allow your mind to focus on something else so that you stay fresh. It's not easy but this is really important.

I also think that you should never forget the amazing team of people who deliver services on behalf of the Council often in difficult conditions at all times of the day. Spending time to understand and acknowledge what they do is really important across the Council.

What are your plans for retirement?

I intend to have some time off and then see what happens. I enjoy walking, playing golf and watching sport. It has been great to do some of these albeit it's not ideal at the moment due to the lockdown. I'm looking forward to the spring and new challenges whatever these may be in the future.

Any final comments?

I have had an amazing career of 43 years in local government. For those thinking about their career my advice would be that you can achieve what you want to achieve. I started my career as a beach lifeguard/pool attendant and went on to be Chief Executive. There is no reason why someone else can't do the same. This does require hard work, good relationship and political management, positivity towards change and definitely a sense of humour but it can be achieved.

I honestly believe that my journey from the frontline to the most senior officer position made me a better Chief Executive and person as I understand the operational aspects of the organisation better. I have also seen some fantastic chief executives who have had a similar journey. For those aspiring to have a career in local government aim high.

- *Terry delivered a presentation on how frontline services are responding to the new normal at the APSE Performance Networks Seminar 2020. You can watch a recording of the presentation on the APSE website.*



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An economic fightback plan: Innovating to respond to demand in times of crisis

When world-renowned coachbuilder Wrightbus entered administration, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) immediately activated its Rapid Redundancy Response Programme to keep the factory site open and save as many jobs as possible. We take a closer look at this APSE Service Award-winning scheme.

Based in Northern Ireland, Mid and East Antrim is regarded as the region's manufacturing heartland, and the area has some of the most innovative, dynamic and forward-looking companies in the world, operating there.

However, few could fail to acknowledge that, among all 11 council areas in Northern Ireland, Mid and East Antrim has suffered the greatest number of significant and high-profile challenges in recent years. The closures of major employers JTI Gallaher and Michelin, in particular, resulted in the loss of over 2,000 high value jobs in the Borough, representing a 13% loss in GVA.

The announcement of the administration of Wrightbus, therefore, added significantly to the general sense of real pressure on the borough's previously flourishing manufacturing sector.

In October 2019, MEABC – lead by Chief Executive Anne Donaghy OBE - maximised its role as the local authority to support the brokering of a deal for a new buyer for coachbuilder Wrightbus, to ensure Mid and East Antrim's proud manufacturing heritage was protected, as well as safeguarding the livelihoods of hundreds of residents.

The action taken following the entering of Wrightbus into administration shows that local government – and, in particular, MEABC – was about much more than legislation. Rather, it was about leading innovation, providing leadership and strategy, and encouraging mutually beneficial relationships with both public and private sector partners to the benefit of local citizens.

In this instance, MEABC's innovative approach to reacting quickly to demand proved to be hugely valuable – maximising the collective pool of resources available to support Wrightbus workers at a distressing time.

The impact of MEABC'S innovative Rapid Redundancy Response Programme was not only felt positively by hundreds of former Wrightbus employees, but by many other manufacturing employers in the borough, who made hundreds of hires and benefitted from the vast range of skills among the redundant workers.

The action taken following the entering of Wrightbus into administration shows that local government was about much more than legislation. Rather, it was about leading innovation, providing leadership and strategy.



Since it was taken over by Bamford Bus Company, Wrightbus has gone from strength to strength.

In recent months, Wrightbus' position as a world leader in renewable transport has been cemented with the announcement in December 2020 by the Department for Infrastructure of a £66 million contract for 145 zero and low emission buses for its public transport fleet across Northern Ireland.

The company's hydrogen double decker buses created an impact across the UK last year when they were first launched in Aberdeen in October, and on January 20 2021, Wrightbus announced it was recruiting 46 new staff to support the UK Government's pledge to build 4,000 zero emission buses in the current parliamentary term.

Wrightbus is well known to Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the company made the famous Boris Buses when he was Mayor of London.

The Council is proud to be working closely with Wrightbus on a strategic and long-term vision to establish Ballymena as a 'hydrogen hub' as it positions the Mid and East Antrim Borough as a key component of the government's green energy revolution.

By capitalising on the world leading expertise in clean energy which exists within the Borough, and the commitment of the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government to reduce net carbon emissions, the Council is confident Mid and East Antrim will be rightly recognised as a major player in renewable resources in the coming decades.

Jo Bamford, CEO of Wrightbus, recently said, "We are proud to be playing a pivotal role in the world's net zero ambitions and this green future - the vision we all have of a zero emission planet - will only be achieved if we all work together.

"Hydrogen's time is now and Wrightbus is excited to be at the vanguard of this revolution."

The development of the Hydrogen Training Academy, facilitated by the Council, is an exciting first step in delivering the workforce of the future, responding to current issues and gearing up for future opportunities in the emerging hydrogen economy.

The Academy will deliver a range of entry level introductory hydrogen training in the short term to ensure talent is developed at the grassroots and, in the long term, the Council sees this as a pathway that will attract new talent into the sector through apprenticeship and graduate level provision.

It forms a key strand Mid and East Antrim's wider ambition for the Borough to be at the forefront of the green economy as a key hub for clean technology and the hydrogen economy in Northern Ireland.

In addition to being awarded the prestigious title, MEABC - the only Northern Ireland council to win an award at the APSE Service Awards 2020 - was also shortlisted as a finalist in a further five categories, including Overall Council of the Year.

The Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, Councillor Peter Johnston, said: "These awards recognise the best and most innovative local authorities in the UK and with over 100 organisations taking part, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has shown that it is leading the way in championing the prosperity of all its people.

"Despite our borough being massively impacted by a number of severe economic shocks in recent years, with the closure of JTI Gallaher and Michelin among them, the Council has demonstrated it can provide the necessary leadership and strategy required to build highly rewarding and constructive relationships between the public and private sectors.

"I congratulate all those involved in ensuring Mid and East Antrim Borough Council continues to be among the top-performing local government bodies throughout the United Kingdom."

As part of the sale of Wrightbus last year, and recognising the MEABC's contribution to the transition, approximately 40 acres of land was gifted to the Council as a legacy for the people of Ballymena and Mid and East Antrim

MEABC is now in ongoing negotiations with Queen's University Belfast in terms of research and development support to develop and deliver an ambitious vision for the site, forming a key asset in the NI-wide Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) project. This project will form part of Belfast Region City Deal and also part of Council's advanced manufacturing ecosystem vision.

This proposed transformation of the lands into manufacturing space is being driven by MEABC's Elected Members and Chief Executive.

Ms Donaghy described the company's commitment of Wrightbus to Mid and East Antrim as "a ringing endorsement of our area's world-class advanced manufacturing capabilities and skills base".

She added: "I am extremely excited about what the future holds for Wrightbus, which has a proud reputation as a global leader in its field."

Through this already strong working relationship, the Council and Wrightbus are laying solid foundations for a vibrant, sustainable and prosperous economic future for Mid and East Antrim and Northern Ireland.

- *Mid and East Antrim was named winner in the Best Innovation/ Demand Management Initiative category of the APSE Service Awards, honouring the contribution of local government frontline services and frontline service workers to public services.*



The drones are coming

COVID-19 has accelerated drone programmes throughout the UK. What will this urban transport revolution look like? And what will it mean for UK local authorities?

On 18 January 2021, the UK Government announced the launch of a £30 million programme to speed the use of drones for remote inspection and monitoring of cities, industrial sites and transport links while providing a new layer of emergency services support. It is part of the Government's Future Flight Challenge programme, which aims to make UK a key player in the global drone market, worth up to \$43 billion by 2025 and the urban air mobility sector (see box on page 11).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of drones for medical supplies and parcels throughout the UK. On 9 May a consignment of medical supplies became the first cargo to be carried by drone across the Solent to the Isle of Wight. In the same month drone delivery company Skyports announced the launch of flights of medical aid from the Scottish town of Oban to the Isle of Mull. In August, DronePrep announced plans to establish a drone emergency medical air transport route between Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

This is just the start of a new urban transport revolution. Later this year China's EHang says it will be the world's first manufacturer to gain regulatory approval to fly passengers commercially in an autonomous, electrically-powered air taxi. Sight-seeing trips in these extraordinary vehicles have already taken place (watch an example here).

"For local authorities the drone and electric air taxi industries offer a huge number of opportunities," said Andrew Charlton, Director General of CIVATAglobal, the trade association for local government and the UAM industry, "and an equal number of threats. Apart from the opportunity to take cargo and passenger traffic away from congested roads and put them up in the air there are also substantial revenue-earning opportunities. UAM infrastructure providers and operators will need to buy many different types of services from local authorities, including population density information, structures to host sensors and other data sets for safe flight. Vertiports will need to be added to existing transport infrastructure and hubs. The challenge is to get buy-in from the community and there will be understandable concerns about privacy, noise and safety."

The industry and the government hope that by emphasising the social and environment benefits of drone services – which include speeding up the delivery of medical supplies and COVID tests between hospital and testing labs – the public will be prepared to give drone operators a certain leeway in the early years. But industry will have to adapt their operations to the concerns of local communities, too. Google's Wing delivery company had to make changes to its drone design after residents in Canberra, Australia, objected to the noise and disturbance to pets and farm animals when it launched its food delivery service there in early 2019.

CIVATAglobal is working with local authorities around the world on setting up drone/UAM contact point to manage the threats and the opportunities that this new transport mode will bring.



Prepare for flying autonomous taxis

Urban Air Mobility (UAM) is an exciting near-term concept that will integrate aviation into cities and towns. New aircraft that use electric motors and fly autonomously will be safer, more affordable and quieter than traditional airplanes and helicopters. Many are nearly ready for commercial operations. The introduction of electric air taxis in towns and cities around the world is a three phase revolution.

Crawling (2021-2023) The current first age is seeing the development of regulations and standards for passenger-based UAM services while the first cargo urban air mobility services – including medical, fast-food and package deliveries – are trialled to connect to remote communities. Wing, Flytrex, Manna are pioneers in this area. This stage is also seeing the formation of links between local authorities, regulators and drone service operators which will provide the framework for future passenger operations.

Walking (2023-2032) The second age of UAM will see automated drone deliveries to more densely-populated urban areas on a fully commercial basis in all parts of the world. The introduction of piloted electrical eVTOL services will begin, first in test mode then charging premium prices to individual passengers for city-centre to airport landing site routes, inter-city services and airport-to-airport transfers.

Running (2032 and beyond) The third age of UAM will be the age of autonomy, quiet flight and mass transport. Fleets of fully autonomous delivery drones will fly through city streets day and night. The AAM route network will have expanded to encompass rural connecting flights to city-centres, intra-city then inter-city flights to city-centre flights.



The industry and the Government hope that by emphasising the social and environment benefits of drone services – which include speeding up the delivery of medical supplies and COVID tests between hospital and testing labs – the public will be prepared to give drone operators a certain leeway in the early years.

About CIVATAglobal

The Civic Air Transport Association (CIVATAglobal) is the global trade association of the advanced air mobility (AAM) sector, bringing together cities, local government and industries in a single global community. CIVATA is a forum to share experiences, plans, access information resources and work together on enabling the successful introduction of safe, profitable, environmentally responsible urban air mobility (UAM) operations, from small unmanned air system (sUAS) missions to urban air taxi networks and inter-city services. Visit www.civataglobal.org for further information. •

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Point of view



Local authorities will be crucial to our COVID-recovery

Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair of the APPG on School Food

When the country went into lockdown ten months ago, Local authorities stepped up and have worked around the clock since to ensure that their communities are protected from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whether it is setting up test sites, distributing Government grants to businesses or ensuring the most vulnerable are cared for and supported, local authorities have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

More recently, councils have been able to distribute funds to families via the COVID Winter Grant Scheme; a fund set up by Government in lieu of extending Free School Meals over the Christmas holidays last year and to provide extra support up to March this year.

As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Food (APPG), I was concerned by the messaging from Government about the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, particularly when it came to school meals over the holidays.

The Scheme was considered a “win” because Free School Meals will be extended over the holidays, something the APPG has long fought for.

But the devil is in the detail, and Free School Meal provision over the school holidays only begins at the start of the Easter holidays this year.

That means some families will have missed out on provision over Christmas and unless the Government make a U-turn, children will miss out again during the February half-term too.

One child going hungry is one too many, but with 4 million children growing up in poverty it is estimated that thousands of children will be skipping meals each day.

Local authorities play an important role in supporting families out of poverty; they are best placed to identify those in need of further support and are able to identify solutions that work for them in their area.

Whether it is setting up test sites, distributing Government grants to businesses or ensuring the most vulnerable are cared for and supported, local authorities have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

Local authorities have been crucial to the COVID-19 response and they will be crucial to our recovery too.

But they are in financial turmoil themselves; with income falling and costs and demands on them rising.

The Government promised it would reimburse local authorities for the costs of the pandemic, but in December they abandoned that promise, leaving a funding gap of approximately £2.6bn this financial year.

Instead of supporting local authorities, the Government is forcing them to hike up council tax, hitting the very families Councils are trying to support.

Families shouldn't be forced to foot the bill on this. The Government must fulfil its promise of funding the cost of the pandemic to councils, so that they can protect their frontline services and support families.

The APPG will continue to campaign on issues relating to children's access to food. From the meals they receive in school to the provision during half time. Children need and deserve access to healthy food, especially as we recover from the impact of COVID-19 and local authorities will rightly play an important role in this.

- Sharon spoke on this topic at the APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar 2021 on 28 January. You can download the presentations from the event for free from the APSE website.

apse online seminars

APSE Street Cleansing Seminar 2021

A fresh approach – Developing a service fit for the future



Friday 12 February 2021

Microsoft Teams



Council Matters by Tony Walsh Poet (aka Longfella)

Renowned poet Tony Walsh was commissioned by APSE to create a very special poem in thanks to all the unsung heroes in local government who have worked on the frontline, and behind the scenes, as officers and as councillors, to support our communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are sure you will agree 'Council Matters' is a wonderful way to celebrate the local government family after all of the hard work in 2020.

2020, Covid-19, all that it has brought us
A locked down world as shocks unfurled, and all that it has taught us
About welfare, about healthcare; about learning, schools and teachers
About governments and governance and services that reach us
About neighbourhoods and neighbours; about kindness and community
Morality, locality, the U'n'l in unity
Our NHS, our cleaners; transport, retail – all are key
But, yes, it's true that credit's due to councils, as we'll see

From Abersoch to Aberdeen, from Dundee down to Dover
From Belfast down to Brighton; Burnley, Bristol and all over
From Swansea, Swinton, Swanage, Swindon, Cardiff to Carlisle
These ordinary people go extraordinary miles
In our cities, in our counties, in our villages and towns
They're matching, patching, catching; shoring up and holding down
And the best of times are testing times! Then add in Covid safety!
So council teams, we see you, and the way you've stepped up lately

You've worked from home, perhaps alone, perhaps with screaming kids
We asked you to step up to help our people, and you did!
New skills, new drills, new tasks, new asks; new challenges, new risks
A new resolve to get it solved, you stepped up and did this:

Some set aside your daily lives and just did what was needed
Some volunteered with new ideas and every call was heeded
Such rising to the challenges with new, creative ways
To still deliver services in innovative ways
From early morn, the crack of dawn, and round the clock patrolling
And shifting loads and gritting roads to keep the country rolling
And out all weathers, all together, keeping people fed
The life and death deliveries, the roofs kept over heads
New cycle lanes, and parks maintained, new guidance and new signs
The adaptations, innovations, services online
With weeks at home, folk eat at home so bigger bins than ever
So local crews plus new who's who's and all mucked in together
And kids are bored and kids are scared and kids are undernourished
The teams who've stopped at nothing to help all their children flourish
And older people, lonely people, shielding; the anxiety
Supporting the most vulnerable amongst us in society

In council care homes, old folks, their homes; lonely and alone
Not rejected, *get* connected; bring love down the phone
Of all the tasks, and all the asks, with masks it's no surprise
It took a while, we learned to smile with kindness *in our eyes*
More than carers, face-mask wearers; reassuring friends
When family can't be there, we have been there at the end
With dignity and decency, some draw their final breaths
We're there again to care again, we register their deaths

The desperate and destitute, we've been keeping people fed
We are caring for the living and we're burying the dead
The lives we've helped, the lives we've changed, and yes, the lives we've saved
From the city to the country, from the cradle to the grave

So many people struggling and so many folk in crisis
Social workers, mental health; we've never known it like this
The toughest days, the roughest ways, it's laughter and a brew
Or a thank you card, a laugh, a joke, is all that's got us through
And the pain, the strain, then same again has come at heavy costs
There are colleagues we've found hurting. There are colleagues we have lost.

Days and weeks and months of this, exhausted, maybe fearful
A rollercoaster; resolute, determined, angry, tearful
New masks to wear, new grants to share, new tasks and new procedures
Shattered, battered, knackered, but *still there* when people need us
The needs we've seen, the teams we've seen, the deeds we've seen to cope
The pride, determination to bounce back from this with hope
The leadership and partnership to keep those hopes alive
And housing, parks and libraries, *our services save lives!*

Yes, matching, patching, catching; shoring up and holding down
But with a vision and a mission and ambition for *this town*

Behind the scenes the kind of teams that seldom make the headlines
The officers in offices with guidelines, red lines, deadlines
It's admin, IT, Comms and Finance; HR, Personnel
Caretakers, and bid writers and tech support as well
Councillors who count for us; the stressed elected members
Whose surgeries and services deserve to be remembered
From the caretakers to Chief Execs and *all roles* in between
The public might not know you, but you're valued, and you're seen

From those who send the letters out and those who crunch the numbers
The lifelong public servants who walk quietly among us
Not for greed and not for profit, but for many, *they believe this!*
Together we can do great things! They're working to achieve this
Those who dedicate their lives to keep communities connected
Deserve to feel supported and deserve to be respected

But fewer people, shrinking budgets, off the scale demands
The pressures and the stresses that it's hard to understand
Still working minor miracles when the coffers are all bare
With patches on the patches of the safety net repairs
Underfund us, undermine us; yes, and blame "the bloody council!"
But when it *hits the fan*, we *need a plan* and when it counts'll
be the council, saying trust us and uncuff us, here's the evidence
Efficiency done differently; proficiency and excellence
And councils matter! Local matters! Right across our nation
Imagine if we backed this, the resulting transformation!
Plus the talents and the energies, the skills of our community
Empower us to empower them! Now, *that's* the opportunity!

And Covid is a moment to see everything *we should be*
But more than that, much more than that, *there's everything we could be!*

We've clapped our hands and tapped on pans but clapping's not enough
There is value, there are values, added value from this stuff
And budget cuts and pay freezes, well that's another day
But at Christmas time, at this hard time, let's take the time to say
That we've known no greater challenge, but you rose to it, and how!
And if no-one has said thank you then we're saying thank you now!
There are lessons to be learned here, but this moment is allowed:
How you've risen to the challenge makes us very, very proud!
And to partners, friends and families who've helped us make it through
Who've seen the strain and eased the pain, we'd like to thank you too

And we know this isn't over, there's a long way still to go
And so many work at Christmas, Christmas Day even, we know
And as 2020 staggers into 2021
Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, each and every one
What we've learned and what you've earned is it's important to enjoy
Togetherness, community and love and peace and joy

Merry Christmas. Thank you.

Tony Walsh Poet (aka Longfella)

*Written and performed by Longfella, Tony Walsh (c) Longfella Ltd 2020 All rights reserved www.longfella.co.uk
Twitter: @LongfellaPoet Commissioned by APSE*

We thank those of you who supported this project by kindly sending in their stories and images which contributed to developing this tribute to you the Local Government Family. We hope we have done you proud!

You can watch Tony Walsh perform the poem by clicking here.


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Development in Progress – December 2020



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It's our experience of what you can't see, that helps create our beautiful spaces

Formerly known as Cemetery Development Services, The CDS Group has been on an incredible journey. We have undertaken over 400 feasibility studies and completed over 40 new cemeteries in the UK and overseas. Our dedication to your vision has enabled us to gain recognition in the cemetery market, **but now we are expanding.**

Our business now focuses on three distinct areas namely Cemeteries and Crematoria, Parks and Leisure, and Environmental Solutions. We currently have new sites under construction with many more in different stages of project feasibility, design and planning. The quality of our work has not changed; maintaining the high level of service you expect.

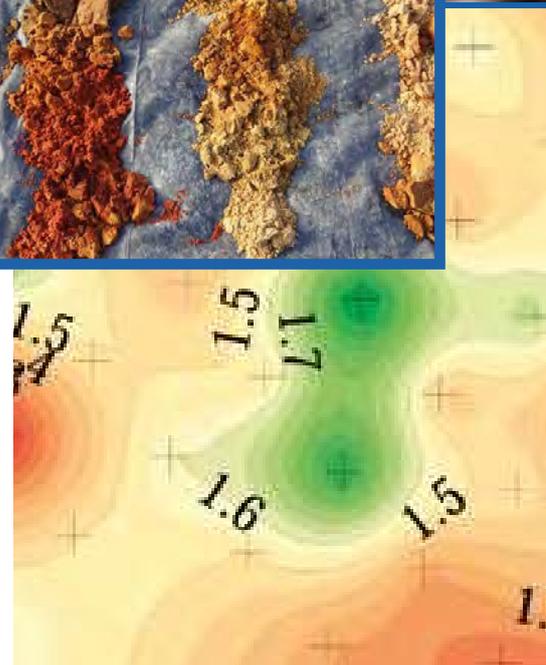
CDS are with you every step of the way, from Feasibility Studies, Landscape and Concept Design through to Planning, Construction and Delivery, ensuring a seamless experience from inception to completion.



Our team of highly qualified specialists - field surveyors, engineers and designers - are committed to creating beautifully landscaped and thoughtfully constructed developments. Ones that have distinctive spatial qualities but also offer excellent commercial value, and that are low-maintenance environments with minimal operational costs.

Our Green Agenda also ensures that our developments are environmentally friendly, offer reductions in emissions and pollution whilst helping improve biodiversity.

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- Identify partnership opportunities.
- Develop new relationships in an effort to grow business and help company expand.
- Maintain existing business.
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Qualifications

- Degree or equivalent experience
- 3 - 4 years' prior industry related business development experience
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Proven knowledge and execution of successful development growth with Senior Public Sector officers and solicitors.
- Salary: Dependent on experience.

For further details, contact: Chris.grogan@hoopers.co.uk

New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome **Velocity**



Road repair, maintenance and preservation specialist Velocity has over 25 years' experience of bringing innovation to the UK highways sector.

Velocity pioneered spray-injection patching, an innovative technique for corrective and preventative highway maintenance.

Working for local authorities and term-maintenance contractors throughout the UK, Velocity are committed to helping deliver of the challenge of maintaining our vital road network, helping to get more from allocated budgets and deliver an effective service for road-users.

Velocity Patching is a permanent repair process for potholes and other defects. A single machine and two- or three-man crew can repair up to 200 repairs per day at less than a third of the price of traditional methods. Suitable for use in both urban and rural locations, the speed of the process minimises disruption for road users and makes maintenance budgets go much further.

Alongside Velocity Patching, the company has recently introduced a new service, Velocity Preservation. Velocity Preservation is a preservative product that 'locks in' the current condition of highways that are in good condition, preventing the deterioration that causes potholes and extending their lifespan.

Dominic Gardner, Managing Director of Velocity, said, "We're looking forward to working with APSE members to share best practices we have experienced with local authorities that have adopted our processes.

"As an experienced contractor, we work hard to bring mutually beneficial partnerships with our customers, helping them to achieve their goals.

"We continually invest in our people and technology to deliver high-quality, safe services. Every year we repair over half-a-million defects on Britain's roads, delivering safer and smoother journeys for road users, saving millions for taxpayers and helping to mitigate the climate emergency by reducing CO2 emissions associated with road repairs by 90% compared to traditional methods."

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, spoke of his enthusiasm for this new partnership, "As a market-leader in road maintenance, APSE members will benefit enormously from Velocity's expertise and cutting-edge technology; helping them make significant savings at a time of growing financial uncertainty. We are delighted to welcome Velocity into the APSE family!"

Velocity are active contributors to industry standards, participating in the development of NHSS 13 and the new British Standard for Spray-Injection Patching, BS 10947:2019.

Discover how Velocity can help your local authority road maintenance team by clicking here

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Annual Service Awards 2020

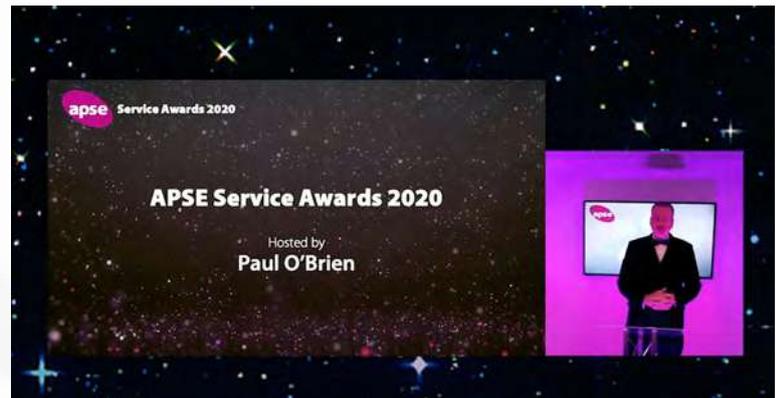
Celebrating outstanding achievement and innovation within local government service

We are delighted to announce the winners of the APSE Service Awards 2020!

The finalist councils were selected by an expert panel of judges following outstanding performance and innovation over a range of frontline services. The special online award ceremony took place on 15 December 2020.

Announcing the winners, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, "After a year of such turmoil for our communities every finalist and every winner thoroughly deserves to be recognised for the fantastic work they do at the frontline of local public services. I commend you all."

Adding to the comments APSE National Chair Cllr Mark Pengelly said, "The pandemic has demonstrated that local council frontline services are the fourth emergency service, supporting people of all ages with services from parks to school meals, from collecting bins to caring for older people. Today is their day. Congratulations to you all."



The full recording of the APSE Service Awards 2020 is available to watch on APSE's YouTube channel.



Best Workforce Initiative



Implementing a communication app within the Building Cleaning and School Catering Workforce

The Council introduced an innovative communication app to improve connectivity with its large and dispersed cleaning and catering workforce. Following careful consultation, employees agreed to download the app onto their personal mobile phones. This has allowed management to

Finalists

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Luton Council
South Ayrshire Council
Swansea Council
Torfaen County Borough Council

Winner: Hartlepool Borough Council

quickly deliver individual and group messages, obtain feedback, provide e-learning opportunities and create a self-service booking system for meetings and events. Crucially it has enabled staff resources to be organised and redirected during the COVID-19 crisis, ultimately keeping customers satisfied and safe.

Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative



Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration

In 2010 the Council adopted a Masterplan for Wokingham Town Centre and started on a major project to regenerate three key areas within the town centre at Elms Field, Peach Place and the Carnival site. The Council's regeneration scheme is helping Wokingham thrive by creating

Finalists

East Suffolk Council
Fife Council
North Kesteven District Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Stockport Homes Group
Swansea Council
Wokingham Borough Council

Winner: Wokingham Borough Council

new community spaces, improving the local retail and leisure mix and delivering high quality homes. Benefits are already being seen with new businesses and facilities opening and significantly increased public positivity about the town.

Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative



Transforming Newham's Pest Control Services

London Network for Pest Solutions (LNPS) is a limited company, wholly owned by the London Borough of Newham, delivering high-quality, fast, efficient, effective and affordable pest control services. The partnership has delivered savings to the Council and generated

Finalists

Derry City and Strabane District Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Education Authority (NI)
Glasgow City Council
London Borough of Hounslow
London Network for Pest Solutions Ltd (Newham Council)
West Lindsey District Council

Winner: London Network for Pest Solutions Ltd

additional income by generating a net profit of over £100,000 in the last two years. The business is overseen by a shareholder board made up of staff, directors and members which allows greater scrutiny of a service that is sometimes forgotten.

Best Health and Well-being Initiative (incl. Social Care)



Wolverhampton's COVID-19 Local Support System

Wolverhampton's Local Support System was established during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Community Hub Contact Centre, which helped provide important advice via telephone and email to 8,000 enquirers, also pairing residents up with altruistic volunteers to be

Finalists

- Aberdeen City Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Dorset Council
- East Suffolk Council
- Kettering Borough Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Three Rivers District Council

Winner: City of Wolverhampton Council

personal shoppers and prescription collectors. The Food Distribution Hub, which produced over 1 million meals between April and June, delivered to recipients shielding in their homes from coronavirus. Whilst difficult to measure, the system likely saved hundreds of lives.

Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative



Reducing Dudley's Mattress Mountain

Through an innovative partnership with an enterprising new business, Dudley has reduced landfill, increased recycling and provided an improved, value for money bulk collection service to residents. With the main driver to find a solution to the challenges of mattress disposal,

Finalists

- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- North Norfolk District Council
- Scarborough Borough Council
- Wakefield Council

Winner: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

the Council entered into a contract with Textek Ltd, offering residents a kerbside bulk collection service where items that would otherwise have been sent to landfill, are recycled: the first public/private sector partnership of its kind in the country.

Best Collaborative Working Initiative (with other public sector or third sector)



School Meals Catering Rise to the Challenge

The Education Authority (NI) – Catering are responsible for delivering 145,000 meals per day to nurseries, primary and post-primary children across Northern Ireland. As the UK entered lockdown, schools closed, and the NHS and Support Networks moved to the front-line in the

Finalists

- Association of Directors of Public Health London
- Belfast City Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Education Authority (NI)
- Flintshire County Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Oxford Direct Services (ODS)
- Stroud District Council

Winner: Education Authority (NI)

battle against COVID-19. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service made a request to provide packed lunch boxes to their staff across NI. The catering staff from the Education Authority stepped up and met the challenge.

Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative



NYES – across the North and beyond in education

North Yorkshire Education Services is a provider of specialist education support services, from facilities management to professional services and education and learning support. Over the past 12 months, the organisation – part of North Yorkshire County Council – has successfully grown its business from a customer base predominately in North

Finalists

Durham County Council
Essex County Council
London Network for Pest Solutions Ltd (Newham Council)
North Lanarkshire Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Nottingham City Council
Shropshire Council

Winner: North Yorkshire County Council

Yorkshire to over 1000 across England, generating a revenue of over £40m using a range of commercial business growth techniques including organic market growth, product and business partnerships, acquisition and product development.

Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)



Thurrock Micro-Enterprises – ordinary people doing extraordinary things

Micro-enterprises are part of a community of tangible and successful, innovative and collaborative approach to health and care transformation. In its fourth year, the programme has now helped 111 micros to be set up – supporting ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Feedback

Finalists

BCP Council
Cambridge City Council
East Ayrshire Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Liverpool Streetscene Services Ltd
London Borough of Redbridge
Thurrock Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Thurrock Council

from professionals is incredibly positive and for some users it has been life-changing. Individuals get the majority of support they need from within their neighbourhood and access health and care services less frequently.

Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative



An Economic Fightback Plan: Innovating to Respond to Demand in Times of Crisis

In September 2019, 1,200 workers were made redundant when world-renowned coachbuilder Wrightbus (best known for the “Boris Bus”) entered administration. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council immediately activated its Rapid Redundancy Response Programme, led

Finalists

East Riding of Yorkshire Council
London Waste and Recycling Board
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Newcastle City Council
Oxfordshire County Council
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Winner: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

by the Elected Members and Council Chief Executive Anne Donaghy. The Council initiated a Northern Ireland-wide collaborative campaign along with central and UK government and business leaders from throughout the region to keep the factory site open and save as many jobs as possible.

Best Climate Action Initiative



An Holistic Approach to Climate Action in County Durham

Despite the challenges of being a rural authority, politicians, corporate managements and staff are united in tackling climate change for the benefit of residents. The Council is delivering innovative technological, behavioural and organisational projects to ensure a holistic and

Finalists

- Cornwall Council
- Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council
- Durham County Council
- London Borough of Islington
- Nottingham City Council
- Southampton City Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: Durham County Council

comprehensive approach. Organisationally, it has incorporated climate action into job descriptions, financial planning and strategic planning. Behaviourally it has ambitious projects to engage with schools, communities and council staff, while the Council is delivering innovation through geothermal heat and zero carbon buildings retrofits.

Best Service Team of the Year: Construction and Building Service



Projects Unit (Coastal Defence Projects)

Scarborough Borough Council's 'Projects Unit' has been successful in the management of three major coastal defence schemes completed in 2019 with a combined value of £25,048,000. This has delivered the better protection of 1,028 properties (including 216 businesses) from coastal

Finalists

- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Scarborough Borough Council
- Swansea Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: Scarborough Borough Council

erosion, sea flooding and coastal slope instability for the next 100 years with present value benefits of £263,352k better protected. This small Borough Council team has delivered projects focused on engagement and openness with external partners and the wider public.

Best Service Team of the Year: Catering Service



Plastic Reduction Pilot

Plastic is incredibly versatile and long-lasting, finding its way into every corner of our lives. The very qualities that make plastic so useful also make it a huge problem. North Lanarkshire Council's Environmental Strategy was launched in April 2019. An integral part of the strategy was

Finalists

- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Shropshire Council

Winner: North Lanarkshire Council

the Single Use Plastic Action Plan (2019-2024)-approved in November 2019. The first phase focused on the catering service. The roll out is based on a spend to save model.

Best Service Team of the Year: Facilities Management and Building Cleaning Service



The diversification and expansion of South Tyneside Council's Building Cleaning Service

South Tyneside Council's Building Cleaning Team consistently strives for continuous improvement. Its improvements to date enabled significant reinvestment back into the team, allowing it to offer existing services to wider markets. In addition, investment in specialist equipment and

Finalists

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Education Authority (NI)
Lincolnshire County Council
North Lanarkshire Council
South Tyneside Council

Winner: South Tyneside Council

training allowed the Council to further diversify its extensive commercial offering. To accommodate this expansion, ensuring it continues to deliver exceptional services to all of its customers, the Council implemented a number of further improvements to modernise back office operations, significantly enhancing customer experience.

Best Service Team of the Year: Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service



The Deal is real for Wigan's Highways

Wigan Council provides highway services to 326,000 residents, working 365 days a year to keep the borough's infrastructure and residents safe. These frontline services can be too easily be taken for granted, particularly when faced with one of the top 10 largest budget reductions

Finalists

Cumbria County Council
Kent County Council / Bouygues Energies & Services
South Gloucestershire Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Wigan Council

– £160m (43%). In Wigan, the Council introduced The Deal, an informal agreement between the Council and residents to 'transform rather than cut services' to protect the most vulnerable and keep the frontline services that resident's value.

Best Service Team of the Year: Transport and Fleet Maintenance Service



Nottingham Passenger Transport – Better Service, Lower Cost, Fewer Emissions

The Council's Passenger Transport service has gone from a position where outsourcing was considered to one of the cheapest providers of adult and SEN transport in the country. Alongside these changes, we

Finalists

Aberdeen City Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Education Authority (NI)
Fife Council
Nottingham City Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

have improved customer service and introduced five of the first fully-electric minibuses in the UK. The Council now offers an efficient, high-quality, low-emission service for our citizens and, despite continued challenges within the social care sector, we're committed to providing an exemplary service which meets the needs of our customers.

Best Service Team of the Year: Cemetery and Crematorium Service



Meeting local needs sympathetically

More than £6 million has been invested by the Council into the development of Lea Fields Crematorium, which officially opened in January 2020. The state of the art facility is the first to be built in the district and means local residents have much shorter journeys, instead

Finalists

- Ashford Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Council
- Cardiff Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Winner: West Lindsey District Council

of travelling significant distances to facilities outside the district. Funeral directors have described it as a 'breath of fresh air and a much needed facility' in a 'beautiful setting'.

Best Service Team of the Year: Waste Management and Recycling Service



East Riding Waste and Recycling Team

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has achieved England's top recycling rate for three years running, receiving the inaugural trophy for "Local Authority Recycling League Champion for England". The Waste and Recycling Team's proactive schemes and close partnership working with

Finalists

- Ashfield District Council
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Sevenoaks District Council
- South Ayrshire Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

residents has increased recycling and improved services. A focus on bin contamination through communication with residents and supporting crews, has reduced missed bins and contamination levels. Despite huge challenges and budget pressures, the team worked hard to overcome them.

Best Service Team of the Year: Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service (Public Realm)



Delivering Street Cleansing & Streetscene Services Harnessing Community Volunteers

Faced with unprecedented pressure on 'Street Cleansing Services', especially in the Top Valley/Warren Hill Estate area of Gedling Borough, both in terms of finances, and ever escalating complaints. A radical

Finalists

- Barnsley Council
- Cambridge City Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- London Borough of Redbridge
- Nottingham City Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Winner: Gedling Borough Council

solution was required to resolve the situation. By establishing a 'Clean Streets Partnership' working together with neighbouring authorities and local resident groups in a dynamic relationship. GBC Street Cleansing Services managed to raise standards of delivery and added social value to ensure tidier streets and better integrated waste and recycling.

Best Service Team of the Year: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service



Putting People First in Parks and Open Spaces

Our service aims and achievements can be grouped into Environmental, Innovation, and Sustainability. Ambitions for the city's parks and urban spaces, cleanliness, and environmental targets are clearly detailed in the Council's manifesto pledges. It achieves these aims through combining

Finalists

Ashford Borough Council
Cambridge City Council
Gedling Borough Council
Nottingham City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Winkfield Parish Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

strategy development, building support networks in the community by engaging local partners and volunteers. Attracting new funding also means the Council can build and enhance its projects. Innovative new projects have captured the imagination of the city and gained considerable support.

Best Service Team of the Year: Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service



Go Gateshead – An amazing 2019!

The Go Gateshead Sport & Leisure Service has undergone significant change since 2015, following the introduction of a new strategy devised to be more commercially focused, aimed to reduce the operating subsidy whilst delivering against policy objectives. This submission demonstrates

Finalists

Corby Borough Council
Derbyshire Dales District Council
Derry City and Strabane District Council
Gateshead Council
Swansea Council
West Lindsey District Council

Winner: Gateshead Council

the success specifically over the last 12 months as part of our journey in relation to key programme achievements and improvements.

Best Service Team of the Year: Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Regulatory Service



Taking on the issues that matter, whether that is local or a national problem affecting our residence and the reputation of Swansea

Trading Standards is no longer just a weights and measures section within the local authority, more complex investigations are being pushed its way. These have a huge impact on the local economy and health and

Finalists

Cambridge City Council
Derby City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Swansea Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Swansea Council

wellbeing of local residents. Over the last year this has seen Swansea deal with a call centres calling in excess of 27,000 Welsh residence offering free boilers that didn't exist and also a national retailer offering a premier lobster dish which didn't have any lobster.

Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery



Winner:

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Finalists:

- Aberdeen City Council
- Cambridge City Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Swansea Council

A big thank you to our 2020 Service Award supporters





“I will miss the people. I already do.”

Having dedicated over four decades of her life to public service, Fiona Lees, who has held the position of Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council since April 2004, will bid farewell to the authority in January 2021. APSE Direct took the time to speak to Fiona about her exceptional career in local government.

Fiona, having joined the local government family 42 years ago, you have spent the last 17 as Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council. As Chief Executive, what has been your greatest achievement?

When you work in public service, it is never about personal achievements, first and foremost it is about the communities you serve and helping others to achieve what they want to see, for their families, themselves and their communities.

I am so proud of our Council and the difference we have made: new schools, new homes, care and support for our residents, investment in the economy and protection and enhancement of our environment. But when I reflect on my time at East Ayrshire, my abiding memory will be the way we have worked together with and for our communities. We have never been closer to

our communities than we are now and this has been as vital to our COVID-19 response, as it will be to our recovery and renewal.

Over 40 years ago, I started working with communities and on my last day of work, I was pleased to be able to attend my final meeting of the Social Renewal Advisory Board, with the Cabinet Secretaries for Communities and Local Government and Social Security and Older People. The Board was set up the Scottish Government to make proposals that can help to renew Scotland, once we start to emerge from the Pandemic.

The Board's report was published on the 21 January 2021 and sets out twenty Calls to Action, which reflect the urgent need for change and which if implemented have the power to transform our society, focusing on structural inequalities and helping those who have experienced the worst impacts of COVID-19. The Board's work has lived

experience at its heart and shines a light on the kind of society that we could be.

Of course, our standing, how we are viewed and our reputation help us to do an even better job and that is why best value audits, external inspection, accreditation and awards are also important. I am really pleased that over the years our teams have had their efforts recognised, by bodies such as APSE and in 2017, we were awarded Council of the Year by IESE.

In your 16 years at the helm of the Council, what change has been most dramatic (e.g. changes in service delivery, demands/expectations of your role)?

The things that people wanted when I started working in communities over 40 years ago, are the same things people want now: they want a good job that they enjoy; they want to give their family a good life; and they want their children to do well. What has changed most is the way we work with our communities and partners, to help turn hopes and dreams into reality.

Our transformation journey began over ten years ago and new ways of working have been shaped and informed by the needs and aspirations of the communities and people of East Ayrshire. Many of the reforms we have witnessed over the last decades have had unintended consequences: they have created a culture of dependency, a culture of doing things to people, or for people, rather than with people. We recognised that to deliver the change we needed to see, we had to take decisive and comprehensive action, but we also had to transform our relationships with our communities.

We talked to our communities about the challenges we faced and we asked what they thought we should be doing and what role they wanted to have. They told us they wanted to be recognised, have their contribution valued and they wanted us to be open and honest about the challenges we are facing, so that they could be part of the solution.

In East Ayrshire, we know what is important to people and what they expect of their Council. Because of the level of trust and confidence we have in those relationships, we have changed the way we do things, cut through bureaucracy and respond faster that we did in the past.

What has been your biggest challenge as Chief Executive?

There have been many challenges throughout my working life, but they are all dwarfed by COVID-19 and I wish the people I served were not facing the hardship and

heartbreak that the virus has brought with it. Whilst we have all been affected by the pandemic, the social, economic and health harms are far greater for some than they are for others and it will be essential that our recovery and response takes account of this disproportionate impact. Councils will need to rise to their community leadership role and ensure that those who have been most affected, get the empathy, understanding and support they need moving forward.

I believe that the tone you set as a leader is really important. I always try to be reflective, rather than regretful, with the intention of improving and doing better. People need to feel empowered and our teams need to feel safe to take decisions and to take risks. My message has always been clear, do what you think is the right thing to do and I've got your back. This has been so important throughout the pandemic and I have been humbled and inspired by the way our teams and communities have worked together and learned together, in joint endeavour.

What will you miss most about the role?

I will miss the people. I already do. It is always a joy to spend time in communities and over the years I have met so many incredible people. Every face is a story and every place is a memory and it has been the privilege of my

In East Ayrshire, we have never been closer to our communities; we know what is important to people and what they expect of their Council.

life to serve as Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council.

My job has felt like my family and while you don't leave family, I know that in Eddie Fraser, the Council's new Chief Executive, I am leaving mine in very safe hands.

What advice would you give to your successor?

I have had the pleasure of working with Eddie Fraser for over 20 years and I know he will be a great Chief Executive. This is Eddie's time. So my only words of advice are to enjoy every minute of it ... it truly is the best job in the world!

What are your plans for retirement?

For the first time in my life, I don't have a plan. My family say they need to see more of me

... but that may change once it becomes a reality!

I also enjoy walking and like so many others, I have come to appreciate the outdoors so much more during this past year. I try to get out for a walk every day and no matter what's on my mind, I always return refreshed and reset for whatever lies ahead. Ayrshire has spectacular scenery, with a huge variety of different landscapes and many excellent paths and trails; you never know where a path will take you, which could not be more apt for me, right now.

- *Fiona delivered a presentation on how frontline services are responding to the new normal at the APSE Performance Networks Seminar 2020. You can watch a recording of the presentation on the APSE website.*

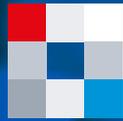
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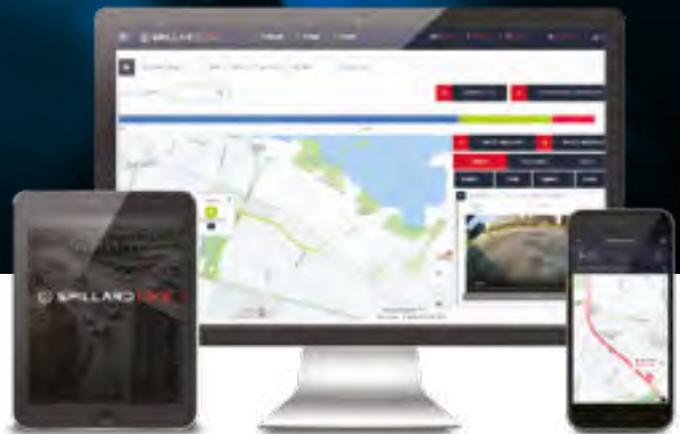
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Getting to grips with COVID

Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive of Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, discusses her pride in frontline service continuity throughout COVID-19, as well as the ways her Council as embedded a culture of employee engagement in spite of the threats to jobs and services.



In December 2020, I was invited to share how Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council in Northern Ireland continued to provide high performing frontline services during the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 at the APSE Performance Networks Seminar. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested all of us, staff, management team and Elected Members but I am very proud of our response.

Our local community - residents and businesses – needed us in a time of crisis and through our employee engagement strategy and the close working relationship with our Elected Members, we helped them in every way possible. Essential services were delivered and additional requests from Central Government for local support were also taken on and the flexibility shown by staff made this possible. I am confident that the important role that local government plays in the lives of citizens is recognised and valued going forward.

Our immediate focus was on cemeteries in the rapidly changing landscape in early spring. This area of life, so sensitive and so difficult was the first to experience changes, in the small number of mourners who could attend, new procedures at the grave side and how staff looked – hazmat suits, gloves and masks – not a sight people were used to. Our cemetery staff were truly at the front line and really did not know what they were facing. They addressed their own fears and concerns for themselves and their families and ensured that committals were as dignified, respectful and sensitive as possible in the circumstances.

For a fairly lengthy period our cemeteries were closed to visitors which itself proved very difficult for some residents. Other challenges included staff shortages both due to additional staff being required for committals and staff either testing positive or self-isolating. We could not afford for this front line service to be impacted and assistance came in the form of some very enthusiastic volunteers from our leisure centres which were closed. A small but committed group put themselves forward and offered to help in any way they could. They were quickly redeployed to cemeteries, waste and to other community facing roles. It would not be an exaggeration to say that these fantastic members of staff and their can do attitude ensured that service delivery in high profile frontline services could be continued. We were overwhelmed by the response and, as their Chief Executive, I was pleased and proud of them.



It would not be an exaggeration to say that these fantastic members of staff and their can do attitude ensured that service delivery in high profile frontline services could be continued.

As an example, Brian Creighton, from our leisure team who worked during COVID-19 in a number of key roles but mainly in cemeteries, said, "I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a total transformation getting out of the office and into the fresh air, working with the public and different staff. The cemeteries are areas you drive past every day and you never think much about it. It is only when you are involved, or you have to go to a funeral that you realise what an important role they play and what goes on in the background to prepare a site for funerals and the sensitivities that come along with that."

Moving through the season our focus on cemeteries meant that normal grass cutting was not completed and our summer plants had arrived. We did not have the staff to plant them. The leisure team again stepped up and helped with grass cutting as complaints were on the increase – despite the pandemic. We put a callout to the community to help and we had dozens of volunteers who came out to help us with our planting and indeed who looked after watering and weeding over the summer period.

In terms of Waste and Recycling, the immediate concern again was the safety of staff. Personal Protective Equipment, perspex panels in vehicles and providing vans to transport staff to various locations across the Borough because they couldn't travel in the same vehicle were all provided. We kept our refuse collections going throughout the restrictions and our waste teams received thank you notes on their vehicle windows as well as sweets/biscuits and Easter eggs from residents. The closure of Household Recycling Centres was another difficult decision to implement with considerable complaints from residents. Re-opening inevitably led to unprecedented demand, however our IT staff developed an online appointment system which is still successfully in operation.

Our Environmental Health team has never been busier, various demands on them resulted in increases of 14% for noise complaints, 17% for online dog licence renewals and a staggering 55% for fly-tipping. In addition, they were responsible for the enforcement of social distancing in businesses and the various changes to restrictions across the business sector.

It will not come as a surprise to emphasise the vital importance of communication through all channels - with our residents, Elected Members and staff throughout that difficult period. Enhanced Customer Service through the introduction of a 'live chat' facility resulted in resident satisfaction rates of between 84% and 92%. As you can appreciate, social media played an extremely important

role in terms of our COVID-19 communications strategy. Our reach increased by an unprecedented 47% to 9.65m. We even received a few compliments and we don't normally get many of these! These referred to improved online booking for a range of our services/fitness classes, professionalism of staff, customer excellence and hard work and dedication.

The Registration service for Antrim and Newtownabbey remained open throughout the pandemic. We put new arrangements in place to protect staff and the public and continued to provide the high calibre of empathy required for this important service.

Bearing in mind that Northern Ireland Councils have no responsibility for social services, we worked alongside local community groups and foodbanks, to ensure that our community response was targeted, efficient and addressed the very real needs of residents. When asked by the Northern Ireland Executive, we mobilised our staff to set up the logistics to distribute over 18,000 food boxes to the most vulnerable in society. Again our staff across the Council willingly volunteered their services to achieve this extraordinary community initiative. We also put in place daily telephone calls to the most vulnerable to check that they were well, thereby providing an opportunity for the only chats that some people had over the course of the lockdown.

To show our gratitude, we realised it was important to recognise key community workers, community groups and businesses in our Borough. The Mayor was involved with visiting these outstanding people and presented thank you certificates.

Remote working became the new norm for our staff underpinned by the IT infrastructure and new forms of working such as 'live chat'. Up to 250 staff, including our customer service and business support teams, were equipped in a short space of time to continue to handle calls from the public from home.

Staff health, safety and wellbeing has been at the forefront of everything we have done during COVID-19. We set up a dedicated Human Resources Support Hub which has received over 1,000 calls to date, a much appreciated resource for our staff during times of uncertainty and anxiety.

Our Elected Members were stalwarts to say the least, for residents, community groups, businesses and staff, quickly stepping up in their civic leadership roles. They also adapted very quickly to new ways of working now that our Council meetings are virtual.

Like everyone we are planning for recovery and a return to 'business as usual' along with addressing the challenges presented by Brexit. However, I'm optimistic about the future and realistic to know that rebuilding our economies and supporting our communities will present further demands. As experienced public servants we recognise the benefits of working in partnership with our stakeholders in both the public and private sectors.

I genuinely believe all of the councils deserve an enormous amount of credit and recognition for their leadership in meeting the extraordinary demands that this pandemic has presented and it has emphasised the civic leadership roles that Councils perform on a day and daily basis within our societies and hopefully this recognition will continue into the future.

- *Jacqui delivered a presentation on how frontline services are responding to the new normal at the APSE Performance Networks Seminar 2020. You can watch a recording of the presentation on the APSE website.*





URS Framework Launch Event

10 February 2021

This event will mark the launch of a brand new framework aimed at making it easier for UK councils and other public bodies to find out about, and purchase, everything they need to implement Underground Refuse Systems (URS).

Liverpool City Council, in collaboration with APSE, has created a multi-lot procurement framework which brings market-leading suppliers of Underground Refuse Solutions and associated equipment and services together in one place. The framework is designed to be flexible to cater for individual requirements and is available to all Public Sector Organisations across the UK.

The Event

The event is to be hosted on Microsoft Teams and will provide potential buyers with an introduction to Underground Refuse Solutions and how they can transform refuse collection processes, guidance on how to use the framework and the opportunity to meet and interact directly with the suppliers.



Who should attend

- Anybody with an interest in URS – even if just curious at this stage
- Pre-business case purchasers
- Those ready to purchase

This is a **FREE** event for public sector workers in Councils, Housing Associations, Universities, Colleges, Schools, and all other public bodies.

Programme

Introduction: what's so special about URS?

APSE Solutions

- New developments
- Retro-fitting
- Commercial waste applications
- Sea fronts and other open spaces applications

Meet the supplier Part One:

Introducing the framework suppliers

The framework and how it works:

Liverpool City Council

- Call offs
- Mini-competitions

Meet the supplier Part Two:

Introducing the framework suppliers

Open discussion and questions answered

Book your place now!

Building a consensus for action on the climate crisis

If councils are going to make real progress on mitigating the impact of climate change, securing buy-in from local communities is vital. Drawing on the latest collaboration between APSE Energy and The Consultation Institute, we highlight two examples of local authorities engaging with the public over this most pressing of public policy issues - the approach they took and the results of the engagement exercise.

In April 2019 Camden Council declared a Climate Emergency. It followed this up three months later with the first local Climate Assembly in July 2019 with around 50 local residents participating: Involve and the Camden Climate Assembly. The organisation of the Citizens Assembly was led by officers from Camden Council and overseen by an independent Advisory Board. Its task was to review the content and structure of the Citizens' Assembly to ensure assembly members had enough evidence to address the key issues and to enable them to deliberate in an informed manner.

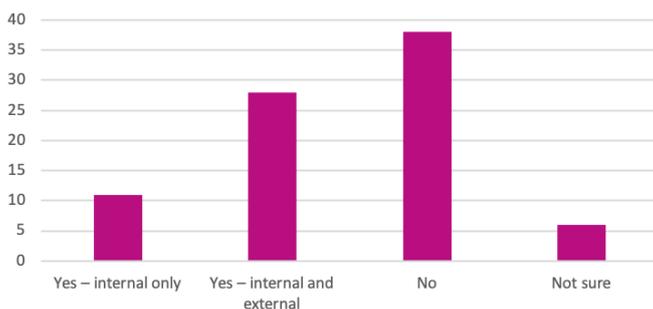
The Council also commissioned Involve (a UK public participation charity) to advise on the development of the Assembly and lead on its design and facilitation, working on the latter with the Democratic Society (a non-profit organisation). The Citizens Assembly met three times during July 2019: with two 3-hour evening sessions and one 6-hour Saturday session, all led by experienced lead facilitators from Involve and the Democratic Society.

The first session focused on background information about climate change and the situation in Camden; the second looked at ideas for actions that could be taken in the home, at neighbourhood or council level; and the third focused on developing, prioritising and agreeing actions at all those levels. The Council's Commonplace platform also received 225 submissions to the Citizens Assembly from local people and organisations. The Council also worked with the Camden Climate Change Alliance to collect around 600 further ideas for action from local businesses.

The Citizens Assembly produced a list of 17 key actions, all of which had at least 75% support from its members. These were forwarded to a full Camden Council meeting in October 2019 and received unanimous support from Councillors of all political parties: Camden Council supports Citizens Assembly actions. Following more widespread community engagement, these actions set the direction of the Camden Climate Action Plan 2020-2025, which was published in June 2020.

An Evaluation of Camden Citizens Assembly was carried out by the Evaluation Team at University College London. Involve has also produced further information about Citizens Assemblies and Juries on Climate Change.

Does the council have a climate change engagement strategy?



Findings from APSE Energy and The Consultation Institute's Climate Emergency Public Engagement Survey





– Engagement Survey

On 20 February 2019 Durham County Council declared a Climate Change Emergency and set ambitious targets to reduce its own carbon emissions by 60% by 2030 (from a 2008/9 baseline) and to investigate what further actions are necessary to make County Durham carbon neutral by 2050 (from a 1990 baseline).

The Climate Change Emergency declaration required a report to be delivered within six months, to set out how these targets might be delivered. This report was presented to council on 17 July 2019 and described a wide range of work areas from renewable energy, to more efficient buildings, fleet and transportation, as well as carbon offset initiatives such as tree planting. Whilst it was agreed that much of the existing work should continue, it was also resolved that the outline future plans should be subject to widespread consultation, as delivery of many of these schemes require a collective approach.

Consultation was undertaken between 19 September and 31 October 2019. It involved public and staff surveys, and meetings/presentations with Area Action Partnerships, Town and Parish Councils and special interest groups such as Extinction Rebellion. Over a thousand responses were received ranging from a simple questionnaire return to more comprehensive responses. In addition, the council coordinated

specific schools and young people based sessions during the period. The Council ran two sessions at County Hall for small groups of children to come together to share their ideas during collaborative workshops for primary and secondary aged pupils on one of the School Climate Strike Days.

In addition through the council's ECO2 Smart Schools Programme they worked with their charity partner OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) to go into 27 schools (nearly 400 pupils) to work with classes and eco-groups and gather their thoughts and feedback on how to become carbon neutral. The overwhelming feedback was that they wanted to get on with it and move faster.

The large volume of responses indicates a strong interest in the issue of climate change, and the details reveal support for the council's overall approach. Priorities identified for the council include reducing the need for travel, more renewable energy, existing buildings to be energy efficient, and new buildings to be as low carbon as possible. Priorities countywide include tree planting, reducing waste, more renewable energy, walking and cycling. It was clear from the responses that there was considerable appetite for partnership working, especially with utility companies.

Arising from the consultation responses a two year costed action plan was developed.

How APSE Energy can help

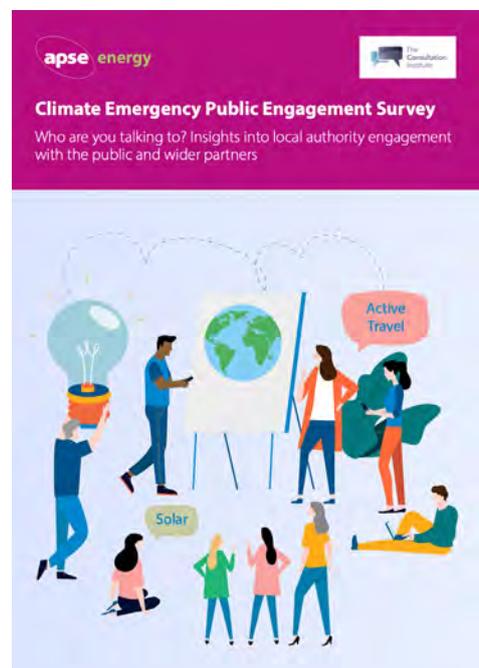
The principles of engagement apply across all local government in the UK. Of course, there will be locally unique circumstances, particular local groups and demographics to bear in mind and the issues that accompany geographic differences such as rural communities or large commuter populations. However, there is a recognition that experience can be shared and that it is often the practical solutions that provide the greatest opportunity for councillors and officers to learn and develop.

APSE Energy has considerable experience of working with local authorities and are able to help councils with this highly important public engagement work. We are able to provide a platform for local authorities to promote the approaches they have taken and to highlight barriers they have come across.

The full report is available to download from the APSE website here.

To find how APSE Energy can help your local authority, please visit the APSE Energy web hub - the unrivalled online resource for all things municipal energy-related.

- For more information contact Phil Brennan on pbrennan@apse.org.uk



How local authorities have embraced lockdown to get their road networks in shape



Chris Dyer, Director of Consultancy, Yotta

The current crisis has highlighted the need for resilience and agility among local authority service teams. Much of the attention so far has focused on the struggles councils have faced in keeping essential services running at a time when some staff at least were ill or self-isolating.

Yet, for councils with the right processes and technologies in place, the pandemic has also brought the opportunity to get ahead on projects on a network seeing lower levels of usage than before. It demonstrates the resilience of councils that they have been able not just to keep up with essential maintenance but even get ahead of the game in terms of works done, and accelerate the whole process, while road traffic levels mean it is safer and less disruptive to do so.

Some authorities have scheduled in carriageway maintenance work, including filling potholes, knowing that they can accelerate the process because there is less traffic and fewer people on the road. Others have re-allocated road space for pedestrians or put in place new pop-up cycle lanes to accommodate a transport mode that has risen to the fore during lockdown. They have seen an opportunity to support more environmentally-friendly modes of transport at a time when these will necessarily be more popular because of the need for people to exercise in a socially distanced way.

Finding a Solution

The efforts of highways maintenance and repair teams have been applauded by roads minister, Baroness Vere, who said: "I want to thank the thousands of highways maintenance and construction workers, and the streetworks operatives, who are all vital to the resilience of our road network. You are doing an outstanding job under extremely challenging circumstances. Thanks to your dedication and commitment, the strategic and local road networks remain open."

We would echo those sentiments but it is also true that to be successful, these approaches call for a different approach to maintaining the network from the norm. They need an approach that will help guarantee the resilience and continuity of network assets whatever the circumstances.

YOTTA
FROM DATA TO DECISIONS

To deliver that at a time when many employees are self-isolating or unwell, others pre-occupied with childcare, and with some employees having to switch service areas at short notice, local authorities urgently need to be using a robust technology platform that provides the key foundation enabling them to gain the necessary insights to ensure resilience and continuity even when staff are working remotely.

To deliver that at a time when many employees are self-isolating or unwell, others pre-occupied with childcare, and with some employees having to switch service areas at short notice, local authorities urgently need to be using a robust technology platform that provides the key foundation enabling them to gain the necessary insights to ensure resilience and continuity even when staff are working remotely.

A New 'Digital' Norm

So how can councils and local authorities achieve this? The short answer is that if they have not invested in digital technologies and are still wedded to paper-based processes they are unlikely to be agile enough to sustain this kind of proactive road maintenance activity. To deliver true resilience and to make the most of asset maintenance in the lockdown and beyond, councils need a digital infrastructure that supports connectivity between people, systems and assets.

They need a technology-backed approach that can manage their teams in a flexible and efficient manner so that they can take advantage of the opportunity to speed ahead with road maintenance schemes and reactive repairs work. They need systems that can connect to assets located in public spaces, inform operational staff what needs doing where and when, and notify them of every ad-hoc report made by the public.

The latest connected asset management platforms can certainly play a part here. And what makes them especially effective in the current crisis is their ability to support working from remote locations, something which has become a necessity for many council employees during the pandemic.

If they are software as a service based, they can be accessed from anywhere. They facilitate working from home, key to keeping back office workers up and running and supporting crews out maintaining the highways. They also support mobile working meaning that operational staff filling in potholes or carrying out resurfacing can be tasked with new jobs or have their projects changed without having to attend a depot or central location.

Having a consistent user interface and user experience in place also makes it easier for councils to move staff quickly from one service area to another where the need for regular staff to take time off for illness or self-isolation dictates, once again key to continuity in these difficult times

Connectivity is also key in a lockdown, of course. It is easy for back office teams to assign work and for engineers and inspection teams to log when they have completed it. If systems have an open application programming interface (API), it is easy for them to connect with other systems and through such an approach make key information publicly available and keep citizens informed.

Connected asset management helps local authorities to monitor not only the quality of inspections, but also ensures that operations are on top of the weekly maintenance schedules that are in place, in all asset categories managed by the local authority or their contractors. In the current crisis, in short, those without this kind of digital technology are likely to struggle to react quickly and get new projects off the ground. Those with it are in a position to rise to the challenge, drive through new infrastructure projects quickly and efficiently and get the work done.

For further information visit www.weareyotta.com

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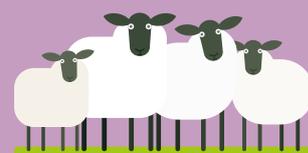
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Hazards, highways and council heroes

Accidents to workers and road users on the highway can have far reaching consequences for local authorities. Alan Plom, ex-HSE Principal Inspector and APSE Associate, highlights the various hazards associated with roadside working and outlines the steps local councils need to take if they are to avoid injuries, ill health and even deaths of employees or members of the public – as well as time-consuming and stressful investigations, which often result in costly fines and negative headlines.

While all local authorities are understandably concentrating on reducing the risk of infection from COVID-19, the 'traditional' hazards faced by local authority staff can easily be overlooked. Some high risk activities are carried out routinely by council staff, often under arduous and dangerous conditions. Any risk is obviously magnified when working on or alongside roads.

Thankfully, fatalities involving litter pickers and other roadside workers are rare, but many front line operatives report having had 'near misses'. (Perhaps they should be called 'near hits'?) Numerous councils and their contractors have been prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work, etc, Act 1974, but these have often related to ill health, rather than a physical 'safety' hazard.

However, throughout the past ten years as a health and safety consultant and as APSE's trainer on activities related to grounds maintenance and working on verges and roads, I have found few council managers aware of significant incidents and relevant prosecutions that have occurred beyond their region. Communicating information about relevant cases and their implications is clearly a challenge in the local authority sector, and I hope that this article will encourage sharing information and stimulate debate. APSE is an ideal conduit.

A look at the potential hazards for local authorities

Deaths and injuries have occurred during work activities associated with roadside maintenance, litter picking and mechanical road sweeping. Some operations such as mowing grass on slopes and tree

falling are inherently higher risk, but for anyone working on narrow verges or central reservations adjacent to (often fast) moving traffic the risk is magnified. Even removing roadkill from carriageways – often dismissed as a '5-minute job' – has had far reaching and tragic consequences.

The most notable cause of ill health associated with roadside maintenance which has led to enforcement action against councils and contractors is exposure to vibration. Excessive use of hand-held machines such as strimmers, hedge cutters, chain saws and leaf blowers causes Hand-Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS), including 'White Finger' Disease and other effects, resulting in long-term pain and permanent disability.

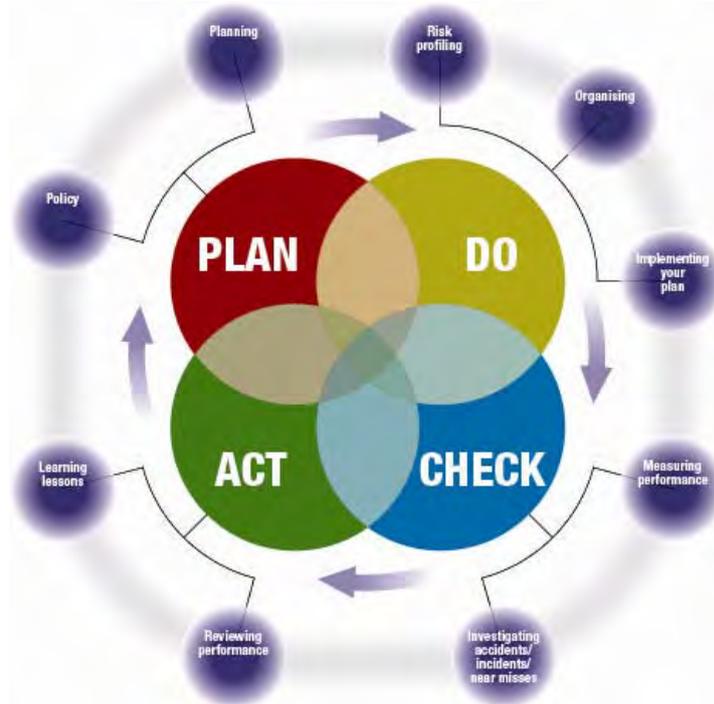
Injuries and ill health do not just affect employees either. Members of the public have also been killed or injured (and vehicles and property damaged) by ejected material, or struck by moving machines and other work vehicles. Serious incidents have occurred during litter picking in unusual locations off-road too, e.g. people run over by a council vehicle while sunbathing in local parks.

Although most incidents go unreported in the media but more serious incidents are inevitably 'newsworthy' and can even make national headlines, generating significant public outcry. Therefore it is important to 'expect the unexpected' and ensure you have effective emergency and media response plans in place - including weekends!

Other physical and health risks must also be anticipated when working in this environment or in contact with plants or animals (dead or alive!). Local authority staff are usually well aware of the risk of blood-borne diseases transmitted through needle stick injuries, e.g. from discarded drug paraphernalia found when working in parks and other public places. But there are many other causes of ill health, often considered inconsequential.

Diseases transmitted by animals (zoonoses) can be fatal (e.g. E.coli) or permanently disabling (e.g. loss of sight from Toxicara found in dog faeces). Lyme Disease from tick bites is found all over the country, and can cause heart problems. Other naturally occurring hazards include plant saps which can cause skin burns (e.g. Giant Hogweed, widely found in open spaces used by the public) and serious irritation is caused by certain species of 'hairy caterpillars' found in trees and bushes (limited to southern counties, so far).

All of these can be unpleasant at best but some can lead to serious and long-term health effects. They should therefore be considered in your COSHH assessments along with potential exposure to 'more obvious' carcinogens and other hazardous materials created or handled during work activities. Hazardous substances such as asbestos and chemical waste are often found in fly-tipping. Remember that many more people die from exposure to asbestos each year than are killed or injured in accidents. Silica dust and diesel fume are also carcinogens and cases of skin cancer are increasing (amongst young people too) from exposure to sunlight, so appropriate precautions must be taken.



The risk of heavy fines and litigation

Convictions can now attract surprisingly high fines. Over recent years, penalties between £100k and £250k have been imposed on councils, including for failure to prevent HAVSs caused by excessive use of hand-held machines such as strimmers, hedge cutters, leaf blowers and mowers. As these machines are all widely used by council staff for long periods, it is no coincidence that cases of HAVS reported under RIDDOR are a common reason for HSE to knock on Town Hall doors and carry out a detailed investigation of council's management arrangements.

In a couple of exceptional cases (neither involving a fatality) councils were fined £1 million and £500k (+ costs) for management failings and use of unsuitable equipment. Such large fines were unusual prior to the introduction of the Sentencing Guidelines* in February 2016, and the potential for harm and other factors such as turnover, etc, are now factors considered by Judges or Magistrates when setting an 'appropriate' fine. The process and impact of the Sentencing Guidelines and the legal implications of 'getting it wrong', are well documented in this recent article written for APSE by Pinsent Masons LLP.

Injuries and cases of ill health also attract the interest of lawyers as well as HSE, and some large civil claims have been paid out to council employees, again for HAVS, as councils often do not have sufficient (long-term) evidence of managing exposure to this now well-publicised hazard, to counter personal injury claims.

Despite this, very few council managers and staff involved in this work are aware of HSE's essential (free) guidance 'Hand-arm vibration in amenity horticulture and how to control the risk', which is applicable to grounds maintenance machines.

Communicating good practice to reduce risks, as well as reports of incidents and prosecutions across UK's local government sector is clearly a challenge. If Team leaders and Heads of Service do not keep up to date with recent incidents and guidance they can find themselves in the dark regarding the significant implications of not adequately protecting their staff and non-employees. The threat of appearing in court on a charge of manslaughter or giving evidence against your employer for corporate manslaughter is a very real one. Remember that numerous individuals have been sent to prison too, although fortunately none from a local authority... Yet!

It is helpful to share examples of any 'near hits' or incidents which have happened elsewhere too. Sadly, potentially serious incidents are often posted as a 'joke' on social media, but these can be used in a positive way as case studies for effective 'Tool Box Talks' and to promote discussion during training and in management meetings too.

All staff involved in delivering the service, from front line operatives up to senior management should be involved in '360 reviews', to learn lessons from others and amend risk assessments, management and working procedures accordingly. Senior managers also need to understand and be made aware of the value of training and 'doing the job right' (i.e. safety and efficiency should go hand-in-hand) as well as possible adverse publicity, as much as any other potential impacts on budgets or performance targets.

Site-specific and dynamic risk assessments are vital to manage operations effectively. This requires well-trained staff and is critical when devising and setting out appropriate Temporary Traffic Management (TTM) arrangements to protect workers as well as road users. All roadside workers need to know what 'looks right' in terms of signs and segregation from traffic, e.g. cones and other methods of protection. Specific training to an appropriate level of detail is required for anyone devising and setting out TTM.

How APSE Training can help

APSE Training's "Health & Safety when Working on Highways and Verges" Masterclass (delivered by Alan) considers how to assess training needs and competence, along with provision of adequate supervision, effective communication, training and management techniques, as well as selection of suitable PPE and equipment. Alan points out that one benefit that has come out of COVID is that safety trainers or managers no longer have to explain what risk assessments are or what 'PPE' stands for!

Case studies are used and participants are encouraged to share their own experiences. This is also a rare opportunity for all involved to review their current risk assessments and method statements. Photographs of difficult sites are used to stimulate discussion between staff who may work in different areas or departments, under different managers. It is also useful to compare practices between and within councils, to promote consistency.

The course is structured around the 4 principles of PLAN, DO, CHECK and ACT, advocated in HSE's current guidance on Managing Health

"This training is a must for anyone working within the UK road network."

Grounds Chargehand,
Conwy council

"Whether you are new to a role or have been in the job a long time, this course is very good for making you aware of what it means to be compliant."

Safety and Training Officer
Calderdale MBC

"The trainer has a deep understanding of the subjects discussed."

He clearly has great experience in these fields"

Graduate Management Trainee,
Winchester City Council

"This course will enhance your skills and increase your knowledge. It really gets you thinking."

Team Leader
Plymouth City Council



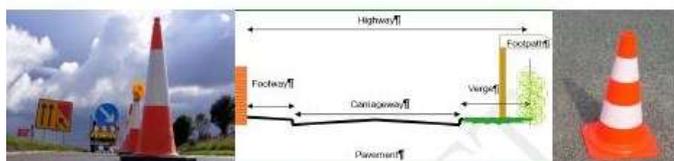
WISH

Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum
FORMAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

SAFE CLEANSING ON THE HIGHWAY MANAGING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MANUAL AND MECHANICAL CLEANSING

This guidance has been developed by the Waste Industry Health and Safety (WISH) Forum to help control safety and health risks in the waste management industry associated with safe cleansing on the highway. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was consulted in the production of this publication. It endorses the sensible, proportionate, reasonable and balanced advice to owners on managing the risk from this guidance during the waste-related activities as set out in the guidance.

This guidance is aimed at those responsible for the design, specification, operation, management, and monitoring of cleansing operations on the highway. It primarily focuses on traffic related issues associated with manual and mechanical cleansing including secondary cleansing, more commonly referred to as litter picking. It contains advice relating to good working practice that spans all aspects of the cleansing operations including temporary traffic management operations where required. It is not intended to be exhaustive and the guidance will point the user towards other relevant guidance that is freely available. It also includes broader management and monitoring issues, as well as the supervision and training of staff.



WISH WASTE 24 Safe cleansing on the highway – Issue 1, 2015

1 of 21

and Safety described in HSG 65(rev). This is relevant to managers and supervisors from a wide range of disciplines and ideal for those new to these areas of responsibility. It is also eligible for 5 CPD points.

Relevant Standards

The implications of incidents and enforcement action related to work of all types on high speed dual carriageways to single lane rural roads, are covered using case studies and through discussion on interpretation and practical application of national standards (i.e. the 'Red Book' and 'Chapter 8') and industry guidance. In particular, Waste 24 'Safe Cleansing on the Highway – Managing the Risks Associated with Manual and Mechanical Cleaning' produced by the Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum (WISH) with input from local authorities and HSE. You can read the guidance here.

WISH has also now produced supplementary guidance in a series of Information Sheets on monitoring, PPE, risk assessment, signage and vehicles. INFO 14 to 18 is available for free at: <https://www.wishforum.org.uk/information>. Other sources of useful guidance and training films are also highlighted and references provided during the course.

Sharing examples of best practice and useful sources of advice, guidance and training within and between councils not only helps attendees to understand what precautions and training are appropriate and effective in a range of typical situations, but also equips managers and supervisors with tools for more effective communication and impactful training. This practical approach is always well-received by delegates.

The course also provides a unique opportunity for councils to review their existing risk assessments and systems of work for litter picking, verge maintenance and other associated tasks, e.g. road sweeping, waste collection, removing fly tipping and road kill, gully emptying, use of pesticides and alternatives for weed control, graffiti removal, tree work and emergencies arising from storm damage, flooding, snow and ice. The latest COVID-19 precautions advocated by APSE and HSE are also reviewed.

This one day Masterclass can also be delivered as an in-house course throughout the UK, with timing and format tailored to suit an individual authority's requirements. However, in response to the pandemic restrictions, it has been adapted for delivery online via APSE's 'virtual classroom' using Microsoft Teams, running over two half-days to provide flexibility.

• **For further details about the course and to see the upcoming schedule click here.**

APSE Scotland Building and Housing Seminar

Building and maintaining sustainable housing for the future



11 February 2021

Online Seminar

The Police Crime Prevention Academy

The Police Crime Prevention Academy is a ProQual approved centre with a proven track record in providing accredited qualifications and professional development for local authority staff, as well as architects and planners.

Specialising in all aspects of crime prevention, and with exclusive links to the Secured by Design initiative, the Academy has recently launched a series of distance learning courses.

These courses – which can be accessed without the need to be away from home or work – are relevant to staff at all levels, and offer a good opportunity to upskill yourself or your staff.

The Academy has already had many local authority staff from across the UK undertake these accredited qualifications, as well as participate in bespoke events tailored to their requirements.

The occupational experience of Academy staff and their subject matter expertise, combined with the Academy's links to the Police Service, ensures that all qualifications are kept up to date to keep pace with changing patterns of criminal behaviour.

The Academy is a police owned non-profit organisation. The accredited qualifications and professional development offered by the Academy replaced the crime prevention and designing out crime courses previously offered by the College of Policing.

www.crimepreventionacademy.com

“It's always essential to continually invest in your employees' development. This qualification offers many benefits to further enhance knowledge and additional learning which will help the team provide an even better service to the public.”



LIMITED OFFER

from the Police Crime Prevention Academy

The Police Crime Prevention Academy has launched a series of distance learning courses for local authority staff. This includes all staff who work in public places, housing and community safety.

These courses can be completed as a qualification or as Continued Professional Development. This is a good opportunity to upskill yourself or your staff in the following subject areas

■ Site Security Awareness

Suitable for all those who work in public spaces and are looking to reduce crime and make places safer.

■ Practical Problem Solving

Suitable for all those who seek to find crime solutions, especially when working in partnership with the police.

■ Prevention of Extremism and Terrorism

Suitable for those who work within prominent public spaces where events take place that can attract large crowds.

■ PREVENT and Safeguarding

For those who work with young and/or vulnerable people.

■ Diversity and Inclusion

A valuable course to raise awareness regarding current legislation and best practice when assisting minority groups.

■ Mental Health First Aid Awareness

Aimed at everyone during these challenging times, this course will help you monitor your personal mental health and react to current pressures.

£120 +VAT to complete any of these courses as a qualification.
Approximately 10 hours to complete.

LIMITED OFFER
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Book before
31st March 2021

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